

During his time here, the Ambassador and his team have also done a wonderful job at showcasing Armenia's vibrant culture and history through many educational and artistic events in our nation's capital such as An Armenian Odyssey in early March 2020.

Once again, I take this opportunity to salute Ambassador Nersesyan on his mission here in the United States. He has truly served in the United States with distinction and humility and has succeeded in strengthening U.S.-Armenia relations. I would like to bid him and his family farewell with the hope that he will continue to shine a bright light on behalf of his country in future diplomatic assignments.

PFAS ACTION ACT OF 2021

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2467, the "PFAS Action Act of 2021", which is comprehensive legislation to regulate Per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances ("PFAS") chemicals, clean up contamination, and protect public health.

H.R. 2467 will provide the protections impacted communities need quickly and for the long term.

Specifically, this bill will require Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to use tools under several environmental statutes to:

Stem the flow of PFAS contamination into the environment by requiring cleanup of contamination sites, setting air emission limits, prohibiting unsafe incineration of PFAS, and limiting the introduction of new PFAS chemicals into commerce;

Identify health risks by requiring comprehensive health testing for all PFAS, reporting of PFAS releases, and monitoring for PFAS in drinking water;

Inform communities of PFAS risks by requiring the EPA Administrator to develop a risk-communication strategy and establish a website with information on testing of household well water; and

Limit human exposure to PFAS by requiring a drinking water standard for PFAS that protects public health, including the health of vulnerable subpopulations like pregnant women, infants, and children, and holding polluters accountable.

The legislation also provides grants to impacted water systems, creates a voluntary label for cookware that is PFAS free, provides guidance for first responders to limit their exposures, and requires effluent limitations and pretreatment standards for PFAS introduction or discharge.

Known as PFAS, for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, the chemicals in this class of approximately 5,000 substances have become notorious as much for their potential danger as for their perseverance.

Because the chemical bonds that hold the compounds together don't break down easily, they last a very long time—a reality that has led to a commonly used name for the group: "Forever chemicals."

PFAS compounds are also ubiquitous and used in a range of products from food-delivery boxes to nonstick cookware to stain-resistant clothing.

But one of the most troubling routes to PFAS exposure is drinking water that has been contaminated by discharges from factories and other facilities.

PFAS chemicals are an urgent public health threat, because they are persistent, bio-accumulative, and toxic.

PFAS have long been linked with adverse health effects including cancer, immune system effects, infertility, impaired child development, high cholesterol, and thyroid disease.

PFAS have been detected in the drinking water of more than 1,400 communities in 49 states, according to research by the PFAS Project at Northeastern University in Boston and the Environmental Working Group (EWG).

According to monitoring by the EPA, millions of Americans are exposed to unsafe levels of PFAS through their drinking water.

Military families and communities are at especially high risk.

A 2018 UCS analysis of 131 U.S. military facilities showed that nearly all had significant PFAS contamination of groundwater or drinking water, some with levels over 100,000 times the safe limit as determined by the most recent draft scientific assessment from the Department of Health and Human Services.

Included in this analysis was the Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston, Texas, which tested at levels of 61,000 parts per trillion.

Clear and swift action from Congress is needed to address the PFAS crisis, and we need an all-hands-on-deck effort to protect both human health and our environment.

This bipartisan legislation will ensure we're treating PFAS as a hazardous chemical and giving our agencies the resources to clean up sites for the betterment of our communities.

I urge all members to join me in voting for H.R. 2467, the "PFAS Action Act of 2021."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Mr. BRADY. Madam Speaker, I was unexpectedly withheld.

Had I been present, I would have voted NAY on Roll Call No. 211, and NAY on Roll Call No. 217.

HONORING DAVIE PINA

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Davie Pina as the Napa County Farm Bureau's 2021 Agriculturalist of the Year.

A sixth generation Napa Valley farmer, Davie holds a strong and deep connection to the community. He attended high school locally at St. Helena High School and went on to attend college at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Davie became an assistant winemaker at Rutherford Hill Winery from 1973 to 1980. After seven years of extensive contributions toward the company, Davie joined John Pina

Jr. & Sons Vineyard Management, where he continued to broaden his knowledge of viticulture. Finally, in 1991, Davie became a managing partner at Pina Vineyard Management, where he has worked ever since.

Along with his demonstrated work ethic and commitment to agriculture, Davie has a rich history of civic engagement and service to the surrounding community. He served on the Board of Directors and as president of the Rutherford Dust Society, a group of community members committed to promoting the highest standards possible for grape-growing and acting as good stewards to the land on which they grow grapes. Davie has also served on the Board of Directors and as president of the Winegrowers of Napa County, and on the Board of Directors for the local Farm Bureau and the Rutherford Grange.

In 1998, he became chair of the Rutherford Dust River Restoration team, which led efforts to restore the Napa River. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the community, in 2007, Davie was recognized by the Napa Valley Grapegrowers as Grower of the Year. As part of his mission to assist his community, Davie has served with the Rutherford Volunteer Fire Department since 1987 and was its chief from 2012 to 2021. In recognition of his tremendous leadership to the department, he was recognized as the 2013 Fire Fighter of the Year. Davie has continuously pioneered innovative ways to approach sustainable agriculture in Napa Valley and is known throughout Napa as someone committed to sustainability and community service in all realms.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that Davie Pina's achievements will leave a tremendous impact on Napa Valley for generations to come. Therefore, it is fitting and proper that we honor him here today.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GLENN THOMPSON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I was not present for the vote on the Motion to Recommit H.R. 2668 during the second vote series on Tuesday, July 20, 2021. If I were present, I would have voted YES on the Motion to Recommit H.R. 2668, the Consumer Protection and Recovery Act.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AND RECOVERY ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2668, the "Consumer Protection and Recovery Act", which will ensure that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) can protect American consumers and put money back in the pockets of consumers who have been the victims of fraud and other scams by amending the Federal Trade Commission Act (FTC Act) to explicitly provide the FTC the ability to obtain both injunctive and

monetary equitable relief for all violations of the laws it enforces.

Specifically, this bill would:

Add a new subsection (e) to section 13 of the FTC Act that specifies types of equitable relief the FTC may pursue: restitution for losses, contract reformation and rescission, money refunds, and the return of property;

Provide the FTC disgorgement authority to seek court orders requiring bad actors repay unjust gains acquired in violation of the law.

Clarify that the FTC may seek temporary restraining orders and preliminary injunctions without bond and that any relief sought under section 13(b) may be for past violations in addition to ongoing and imminent violations.

As the Nation's premier consumer protection agency, the FTC is directed to enforce numerous statutes: the core of which is section 5 of the FTC Act mandating the agency to prevent unfair or deceptive acts or practices and unfair methods of competition.

Section 13(b) of the FTC Act authorizes the FTC to bring suit in federal courts seeking relief for consumers and is a critical enforcement tool the FTC uses to combat fraud and scams under section 5.

In 2020 alone, the FTC returned more than \$482 million to over 1.6 million consumer victims of fraud or illegal business practices.

The FTC's restitution authority under section 13(b) was settled law for over 40 years, but beginning in 2017, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals reversed its own precedent to overturn FTC authority under section 13(b) to obtain monetary relief and the Third Circuit soon followed.

Because of these decisions, close to 48 million Americans in six states became unable to obtain monetary redress under 13(b).

Then, on April 22, 2021, the Supreme Court held in *AMG Capital Management v. FTC* that section 13(b) does not allow the FTC to seek monetary relief or require bad actors to return money earned through illegal activity.

According to Acting Chairwoman Slaughter, the Supreme Court decision "deprived the FTC of the strongest tool [the FTC] had to help consumers."

Mr. Speaker, all five FTC Commissioners have repeatedly urged Congress to take quick action to pass legislation reaffirming FTC authority under section 13(b).

H.R. 2668 does exactly that, by restoring nearly forty years of precedent and giving the FTC the ability to protect Americans from scams and unethical business practices.

Americans need this protection, because every day, and far too often, individuals in Texas and across the country fall victim to financial scammers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to an increase of scams and fraud that prey on consumers' fears and financial insecurities, and inaction on this issue is not an option as it will only embolden bad actors.

H.R. 2668 will ensure that the FTC maintains its ability to return money to the victims of scams.

Seniors especially need this protection, because they have worked their entire lives with the promise of a safe and secure retirement, but scammers and unscrupulous businesses are taking advantage of uncertainty surrounding the pandemic and working overtime to target them.

Retirement accounts are not the only damage these scams cause—they damage the independence and trust of a vulnerable community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen instances of fraud rise in unprecedented numbers, as scammers attempt to take advantage of senior citizens and deprive them of their hard-earned savings.

Bad actors preying on older Americans is, unfortunately, nothing new, but in the midst of a global pandemic impacting Americans' lives and livelihoods, cracking down on those scams must be a priority.

One such scam was thwarted by Houston police and the Harris County District Attorney, who made an arrest in February in an international cyber-scam that bilked unsuspecting, mostly elderly victims out of more than \$1 million.

One victim of the scam, Asuncion Peppers, 74, a retired medical technician knows that first hand; She was bilked out of her life savings.

Hackers contacted Ms. Peppers on Facebook, pretending to be one of her Facebook friends.

She was told she was eligible for a government grant of almost one million dollars and all she had to do was send a check to pay taxes.

Investigators believe the scammers were operating from Nigeria, defrauding senior citizens in the U.S. and around the world.

Before Ms. Peppers realized she was being conned, she sent checks totaling \$87,000 hard-earned money.

She said that she worked three jobs to build her life savings.

Ms. Peppers and her husband are just two of 38 victims bilked out of more than \$1.3 million before the fraud was discovered.

This story is not an isolated incident: although 1 in 20 seniors in the U.S. is a target of fraud schemes, the National Adult Protective Services Association has found that only 1 in 44 seniors report that they are victims of a fraud scheme.

During these unprecedented times, it is imperative that Congress pass legislation that protects U.S. consumers and honest businesses from wrongdoers who steal money through fraud and deception.

Mr. Speaker, we need to strengthen federal prevention efforts and ensure leaders in the public and private sectors are collaborating on effective safeguards.

This begins with ensuring that the FTC has the explicit authority to obtain both injunctive and monetary relief for all violations of the laws it enforces.

I urge all members to join me in voting to pass H.R. 2668, the "Consumer Protection and Recovery Act."

TRIBUTE TO ZAHRA SOMANI
KARAMALI

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and profoundly thank a long

time, super-star member of my staff, Zahra Somani Karamali. After serving in my district offices for thirteen years, Zahra is moving on to pursue a Ph.D. in Psychology and a career as a School Psychologist. It is hard for me to even imagine not having Zahra serving the residents of the 9th Congressional District as one of the most effective Constituent Advocates in the country. Though not in my office, she will always be a beloved member of Team Schakowsky.

Zahra Somani Karamali joined my office in 2008, and she brought perspective, experience, and enthusiasm that have left a permanent impact on our operations and on constituents' lives. She is a dedicated public servant who readily established herself as a strong ally for individuals who would otherwise not have an effective voice. My husband and I had the joy of attending her wedding to Nauman and celebrating the birth and growth of their two wonderful children Ayman and Zayna. She and her family have become cherished friends.

Over the years, Zahra advocated for thousands of constituents who needed help with a wide range of issues. She cut through red tape and solved difficult problems, often in life-changing ways.

Zahra helped immigrant families who were pursuing green cards or struggling to obtain a visa to travel home to visit sick relatives. She helped reunite families, assisted refugees, and helped immigrants obtain naturalization status. She expedited passport applications so that mothers and fathers didn't miss their daughters' wedding abroad. When residents called because they had missing mail or delayed tax returns, Zahra provided an empathetic ear and an enthusiastic hand to help solve those issues. During the pandemic she helped constituents who were stranded abroad and helped constituents obtain desperately needed stimulus checks and important benefits. She fought for constituents to receive all the benefits they needed and deserved and tackled problems big and small with compassion and professionalism.

Zahra is active in the Ismaili community and played an instrumental role in building and strengthening my and my office's relationships with the Muslim community. I am proud to have stood alongside her and so many others in that community in good times and in bad, and I deeply cherish the relationships I've formed along the way.

Zahra is always enthusiastic and willing to do whatever needs to be done. She represented me at office hours in libraries across the northwest suburbs, helped organize and conduct a wide array of events, and spoke on my behalf at events across the district.

Zahra has been an essential member of the team, and a big reason why my office is well known for its effective constituent services. I will miss Zahra very much, as will everyone on the staff. I expect to hear from many constituents who will be very disappointed to hear that Zahra is no longer there to help. We pledge to her that we will all work hard to fill the gap. I know that the fortunate students and families she will serve in the years ahead will benefit from the wonderful gifts that have made Zahra so invaluable to me.